

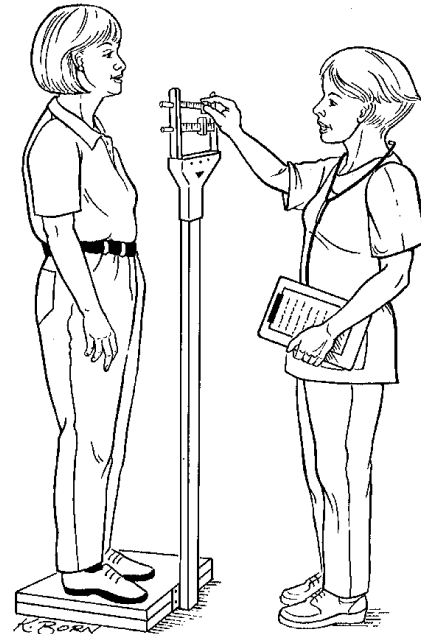
# Why Should I Lose Weight?

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More than 140 million American adults are overweight. Of these, nearly 66 million are obese. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke, even if they have no other risk factors.

Obesity is unhealthy because excess weight puts more strain on your heart. It can raise blood pressure and blood cholesterol and can lead to diabetes. Losing weight is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of heart problems and other diseases.

You can reduce your risk of heart disease by reaching and staying at your best weight. That means cutting back on fats and eating more fruits, vegetables and grains. It also means being physically active.



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## How can I lose weight?

It's easy to start a diet. Staying on one is harder! First, you should prepare yourself by setting goals, thinking ahead to roadblocks along the way, and deciding how to deal with problems.

It's a good idea to see a nutritionist or registered dietitian about an eating plan that's right for you. It's never wise to follow fad diets, go without eating, or try to lose weight too fast. You didn't become overweight overnight. The most successful dieters know they must make changes over time and not get discouraged by setbacks.

- Think about your eating habits. Do you eat out of habit instead of hunger? If you find yourself automatically snacking in front of the television every night, it may be helpful to pick a certain spot in the house and not let yourself eat anywhere else.
- Decide how to handle temptation. When you're offered calorie-rich foods, turn them down nicely, but firmly. Try to dine out at places where there are low-calorie foods to choose from.

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## How should I change my eating habits?

- Eat slowly, take smaller portions and avoid "seconds."
- Eat a few light meals each day instead of one main meal. Don't skip meals.

Choose a variety of healthy foods like fruit, vegetables, cereals, pasta, dried peas and beans, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, lean meat, fish and skinless poultry.

- Cook foods in ways that help remove fat, like baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing. Don't fry foods in oil.
- Read food labels and avoid foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat, trans fat and calories. Avoid pastries, candy bars, pies and cakes.
- Drink lots of water. Limit alcohol and other high-calorie drinks.

## How can physical activity help?

Physical activity is as important as your diet in helping you lose weight! And it's good for your heart, lungs, bones and muscles. Regular physical activity helps lower your risk of heart attack,

stroke, high blood pressure and other health problems. Ask your doctor or health professional for a physical activity plan that's right for you.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.

3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## What are the warning signs of heart attack and stroke?

### Warning Signs of Heart Attack

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

### Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1 ... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How much weight should I lose?

What type of physical activity is best for me?

